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## Obama, Karzai reaffirm 2014 Afghan withdrawal

ABOARD AIR FORCE ONE (AFP) - President Barack Obama and his Afghan counterpart Hamid Karzai yesterday reaffirmed that US troops would leave Afghanistan by the end of 2014, despite calls for an earlier withdrawal.

The two leaders spoke by phone and reaffirmed they were committed to the agreed timetable in which Afghan forces would complete the process of transition and have full responsibility for security across the country by the end of 2014.

## Prime Minister Eman announces possible "11th hour" rescue of refinery

ORANJESTAD -- The roller-coaster ride that is Aruba's relationship with Valero Refinery over the past 3 years may continue beyond the deadline set of April 1, 2012 for the complete shutdown of operations.

Prime Minister Mike Eman called an extraordinary press conference yesterday morning to announce a new development that may result in a last-minute solution for the beleaguered San Nicolas facility.

For more than a year before Valero shutdown in June of 2009, the refinery had been on the market with no takers; tax issues with the government then in place were at an impasse, so operations were discontinued, but employees kept on payroll pending the outcome of elections in September 2009.

A change of administration brought a new agreement and



the retooling and reopening of the refinery took place in December of 2010. However, with the continual climb of the price of crude oil, Valero announced closing of some of their U.S. refineries, such as Delaware City, and indicated towards the end of the fourth quarter 2011 that Aruba's refinery would also no longer be profitable.

Aruba's Prime Minister

Mike Eman and Minister of Finance, Utilities, Communications and Energy, Mike de Meza announced yesterday morning that after attempting to interest a number of nearby national oil companies in partnering with Valero, those who rely on the refinery for their livelihood should not yet give up hope.

Continued on page 4



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## Aruba observes International Consumer's Day with informative conference



**Bart Combee CEO Dutch Consumer Protection**

-Those wishing to be smarter, better informed consumers were welcomed to an initiative by the Ministry of Social & Economic Affairs and Culture on Thursday, March 15 at the Renaissance Convention Center, in observance of International Consumer's Day.

Minister of Social & Economic Affairs and Culture, Michelle Hooyboer-Winklaar personally welcomed attendees to the free, informative program, taking up two-evenings; she quoted President John F. Kennedy, who initiated the day in March of 1962 with the recognition of the rights of

the majority of the population, consumers.

She recited Kennedy's Consumer Bill of Rights:

1. The Right to Safety
2. The Right to Be Informed
3. The Right to Choose
4. The Right to Be Heard

Guest Keynote Speaker Bert Combee, CEO of Holland's national consumer protection agency, Consumentenbond, elaborated with an additional 4 essential consumer considerations to expand this Consumer Bill of Rights:

5. The Right to Satisfaction of Basic Needs
6. The Right to redress
7. The Right to Consumer Education
8. The Right to a Healthy Environment

Until the 1950's, consumers had no rights or resources to action; a movement began during that decade, which President Kennedy recognized and summarized in his speech to Congress.

"Consumers, by definition, include us all. They are the largest economic group in the economy, affecting and affected by almost every public and private economic decision. Two-thirds of all spending in the economy is by consumers.


But they are the only important group in the economy who are not effectively organized, whose views are often not heard." The speech, in its entirety can be found at:

<http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=9108#ixzz1pHc c5a7E>


Mr. Combee explained how consumerism has advanced in Holland by taking advantage

of evolving techniques and technology to impact unfair practices, and the enormous public response they elicit.


*Continued on page 3*



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## Aruba observes International Consumer's Day . . .

Continued from page 2

This is proving effective as Consumentenbond takes the results to the offending companies or industries, demonstrating that their lack of quality has been noticed, and consumers are upset and rebellious in numbers they cannot ignore. Deploying social media has proved highly efficient in providing a platform for consumers to register their dissatisfaction en force, thus providing the evidence of unfair practices they need to take to legislators to establish regulations and to effect change in the various industries.

An important side benefit is that consumers facing difficult situations realize they are not alone and that they have recourse to insure fair practices,



Minister Hooyboer Winklaar and guest speakers

aided by consumer advocates who are battling for them, as long as they will speak out and help to make others aware of unfair or illegal practices. The

Consumentenbond also issues a seal of approval and publishes information pamphlets, while maintaining online sites and blogs to further assist the

Dutch consumer in making wise choices.

Last night's sessions particularly addressed debt, understanding financial agreements

and being able to discern if a contract is actually placing illegal obligations on the debtor.

Among the many speakers during the conference were Litigator Jeannot de Cuba with Van Eps, Kunneman, van Dorne, Dean of the Faculty of Law at the University of Aruba Carlos Bollen, Head of the Consumer Section at the Bureau of Rent & Consumer Affairs, Luciano Maduro, Managing Director of the Stichting Balansa Nobo, Jennifer Tjon A Meeuw, Director of the Central Bank of Aruba Prakash Mungra, and Executive Manager of Economic Services for Aruba Investment Bank, Marielsa Arends-Croes.

by Rosalie Klein



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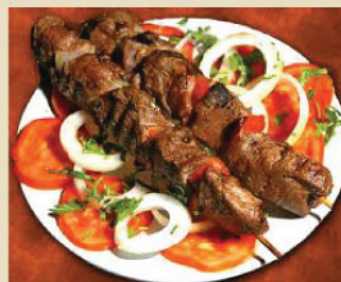




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## Prime Minister Eman announces . . . *Continued from page 1*

Colombia's state oil company, Ecopetrol, which is one of the four principal oil companies in Latin America, has decided to again sit down at the bargaining table with Valero, and the PM expressed he is optimistic regarding the outcome.

April 1 is the deadline set for Valero to discontinue production on Aruba, as their reserves will then be depleted. They have been operating at reduced capacity since the imminent closing was announced, with the continuing hope a last-minute solution would present itself.

The PM advised that even if an agreement is reached between Valero and Ecopetrol by the deadline, it is too close to the planned shutdown to prevent at

the very least a suspension of refinery production until contracts are finalized and new supplies of crude oil begin arriving on Aruba.

Earlier this week, Minister de Meza spent two days in New Jersey to participate in talks with PetroChina; Petrobras of Brazil has also toured the refinery and expressed interest, and the sale price originally set has dropped drastically, but the volatile oil industry and the continually increasing price of crude oil are impediments to agreements. Aruba's refinery is tooled to work with a particularly low grade of crude, which makes it attractive to a number of companies, but there are other factors affecting the refinery's profit

margin, not the least a legal labor system that enforces decent wages and benefits.

Aside from those directly employed by the refinery, there are also peripheral businesses which depend on its operation for their solvency. A number of these discontinued operations

and laid off staff in 2009. Not quite the major economic force it was from 1927 to 1986 under Lago, Aruba's refinery still has quite some impact on several families, businesses and the surrounding community.

During yesterday's press conference, the Prime Minister

Eman advised his administration is actively attempting to facilitate a viable resolution to the situation, but the final agreements and contracts must be made by Valero, which has ownership at present, not the Aruban government.

*by Rosalie Klein*



## National Anthem and Flag Day Slot Tournament

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## Open House at Ateliers 89 Sunday March 18

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This is an invitation to all art lovers to come and visit us. The exhibit rooms of the Ateliers 89 will be open. On exhibit will be art works from the RAKU workshop; there will be music by a Caha di Orgel, and artisans will offer their works for sale. Arroz con pollo is on the menu, free refreshments, coffee and tea.



In the Kinderatelier artist and art teacher Miriam de l'Isle will be exhibiting artworks by her students, some artworks will be for sale. Also there are the little art plates painted by Victoria del'Isle offered for sale. These are little clay plates hand painted specially to commemorate the Dia di Himno y Bandera. These lovely plates are one of a kind, not available anywhere else, beautiful to have or as a gift or souvenir of Aruba.

Put us on your Schedule and come early.

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*A thoughtful mind, when it sees a Nation's flag, sees not the flag only, but the Nation itself; and whatever may be its symbols, its insignia, he reads chiefly in the flag the Government, the principles, the truths, the history which belongs to the Nation that sets it forth.*

*- Henry Ward Beecher."*

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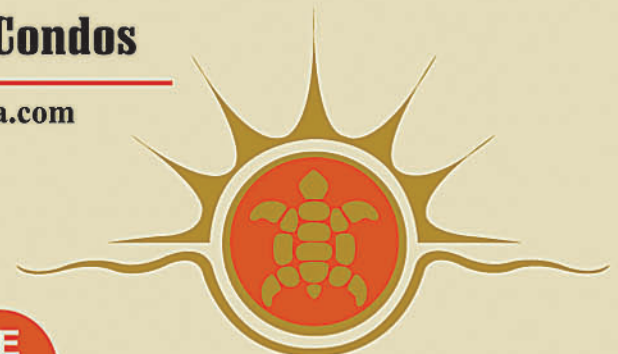
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## US reiterates neutrality in dispute over Falklands

WASHINGTON (AFP) - The United States will remain neutral in Britain's dispute with Argentina over sovereignty of the Falkland Islands, a senior US official said yesterday after British Prime Minister David Cameron's White House visit.

"Our position remains one of neutrality," the official speaking on condition of anonymity told AFP, adding that Washington also recom-

mends a negotiated solution to the decades-long dispute.

Cameron met with President Barack Obama on Wednesday at the White House to discuss the US-British alliance.

Cameron said he discussed the Falklands with Obama, and the president said he preferred the "status quo" regarding sovereignty over the South Atlantic islands.

# UN leader warns N. Korea against rocket launch

UNITED NATIONS (AFP) - UN leader Ban Ki-moon yesterday called on North Korea not to carry out a rocket launch next month which he warned

could breach UN sanctions resolutions.

"The secretary general urges North Korea to reconsider its decision in line with its recent

undertaking to refrain from long-range missile launches," said UN spokesman Martin Nesirky after the North said it would launch a satellite on a

long-range rocket in April.

Ban "is seriously concerned" by North Korea's announced launch, said the spokesman.

The UN leader reaffirmed his call on the North "to fully comply with the relevant resolutions of the Security Council, particularly including the resolution 1874 (from 2009) which bans 'any launch using ballistic missile technology.'"

UN Security Council Resolution 1874 was passed after the North's second nuclear bomb test in 2009.

North Korea announced earlier it would launch a rocket carrying a satellite next month, just 16 days after agreeing to

suspend long-range missile tests in return for massive US food aid

The United States, Japan and South Korea have condemned the plan.

Britain, one of the five permanent members of the Security Council, said North Korea would be in violation of UN sanctions resolutions if it followed through on the threatened operation.

"If this launch goes ahead our understanding is that it would be a violation of Security Council resolutions," said Britain's UN ambassador Mark Lyall Grant. Britain is the council president for March.

## EU court: The Ukraine must ensure Tymoshenko gets medical care

STRASBOURG (AFP) - Europe's top human rights court said yesterday it had asked the Ukraine to ensure that jailed opposition leader Yulia Tymoshenko gets proper medical treatment.

A statement from the European Court of Human Rights said it had written to the authorities in Kiev asking the government to ensure the former prime minister received "adequate medical treatment in an appropriate institution."

Tymoshenko is currently appealing her conviction last

October for abuse of power, for which she was jailed for seven years.

In papers filed to the Strasbourg-based court last year, the 51-year-old politician complained that she had been receiving "no medical care provided for her numerous health problems," the statement said.

The court had decided to prioritise the case "in view of the serious and sensitive nature of the allegations raised" and Kiev had until next Thursday to make any observations on the matter, it said.

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## Belgium holds day of mourning as crash dead flown home

BRUSSELS (AFP) - Grieving Belgians held a minute's silence and church bells tolled across the nation Friday as the bodies of 22 children and six adults killed in a coach crash in a Swiss tunnel were flown home.

Soldiers carried small white coffins out of two military planes after they landed near Brussels, while the cause of the accident remained murky after Swiss prosecutors concluded that the driver was neither inebriated nor ill.

A day after families had to identify the bodies in Switzerland and visited the crash site, pupils, parents and teachers clutched hands in the courtyards of the victims' two schools in their hometowns of Heverlee and Lommel.

With flags flying at half-mast for a national day of mourning, Belgians everywhere held a minute of silence at 11:00 am (1000 GMT) before church bells rang in remembrance of the young victims whose deaths shocked the nation.

Broadcasters went quiet while drivers of buses, metros and trains switched off their engines for a minute as Belgium coped with an outpouring of grief for children who were no older than 11 or 12 when they died Tuesday night.

In the central town of Heverlee, pupils released white balloons as adults sobbed days after a bus carrying 46 children, four teachers and two drivers slammed into an Alpine tunnel wall as they returned from a week-long ski trip.

In the Netherlands, Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte said his "entire cabinet feels the same: shock, powerlessness and especially deep compassion for all those affected".

Members of the Belgian and Dutch royal families were invited by the parents of the victims to memorial ceremonies in both towns next Wednesday.

In Switzerland, investigators sought to unravel the cause of the tragedy.

Investigators were working initially on three hypotheses for the accident, including the possibility that the driver fell ill, technical problems with vehicle and human error.

Probes were ongoing on the two remaining theories, Elsig said, adding that the driver had been going "well below" the tunnel speed limit of 100 kilometres (60 miles) per hour.

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## US student guilty in gay webcam suicide case

NEW YORK (AFP) - A former US university student was found guilty Friday on most counts after he secretly filmed a gay roommate in a sexual encounter shortly before the man committed suicide, news site nj.com reported.

Dharun Ravi, who shared the webcam footage with friends in his dormitory at Rutgers University in New Jersey,

was found guilty of invasion of privacy, although acquitted on some of the hate crimes charges lodged after the tragedy, the local news site said.

Ravi faces a hefty prison term and possibly deportation to his native India.

His lawyer had argued that Ravi was guilty only of a prank gone wrong when he filmed roommate Tyler Clementi in a

kiss with a man, Tweeted friends about what he'd seen and invited them to watch a live webcam video.

The incident, which was followed days later by Clementi's suicide leap from the George Washington Bridge leading into New York City, touched off a debate across the United States about privacy rights and gay bashing.

Ravi was never accused in Clementi's death, but he faced a string of charges accusing him of being motivated by anti-gay bias. The jury returned mixed verdicts on that aspect of the charges.

In addition to the raft of guilty verdicts on invasion of privacy, he was also found guilty on all charges related to attempting to hinder the prosecution.





## Norway intelligence says it couldn't have stopped attacks

OSLO (AFP) - Norway's intelligence agency said Friday it would not have been able to stop the gunman who killed 77 people in twin attacks last year even if it had pursued a tip that he had bought chemicals to make a bomb.

The intelligence service PST has been widely criticised for failing to prevent the July bombing and shooting massacre committed by 33-year-old rightwing extremist Anders Behring Breivik.

"We would not have uncovered Behring Breivik's plans if we had investigated the information in an ordinary way. It is not illegal to buy these chemicals," PST acting director Roger Berg told reporters.

PST had received from Norwegian customs a list of names, including that of Behring Breivik, who had bought chemical products online that could be used to make bombs.

But the agency did not follow up on the information because Behring Breivik, who actively expressed anti-Islamic and anti-immigration remarks online, was not listed in its files.

"Even if we had prioritised the investigation our search

would not have given any new information about Behring Breivik," Berg insisted.

"He was, in our view, a solo terrorist... He planned his terror acts alone for several years and he was extremely careful," he said.

Berg's comments came as he presented a PST evaluation report of its handling of the attacks.

On July 22, Behring Breivik, who has claimed to be on a crusade against multiculturalism and the "Muslim invasion" of Europe, set off a car bomb outside government buildings in Oslo, killing eight people.

He then went to the island of Utoeya northwest of Oslo, and, dressed as a police officer, spent more than an hour shooting and killing another 69 people, mainly teenagers, attending a summer camp hosted by the ruling Labour Party's youth wing.

Berg said he "regretted" his agency was unable to stop Behring Breivik.

On Thursday, Norwegian police apologised for failing to stop Behring Breivik's shooting rampage sooner, admitting that lives were lost as a result and listing a slew of areas where police efforts had not worked effectively.



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Congratulations Aruba on our National Day

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*Democracy is the only system capable of reflecting the humanist premise of equilibrium or balance. The key to its secret is the involvement of the citizen.*

*-John Ralston*







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## 2,000 child soldiers in South Sudan ranks: UN



JUBA (AFP) - South Sudan must uphold promises to abolish its use of child soldiers, with some 2,000 minors still serving in its rebel turned regular army, the UN's top expert on children in conflict said Friday.

The South's military, the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA), repeated pledges again this week -- but the first time as a national army following the South's in-

dependence in July -- to release children from its ranks.

In 2003 the SPLA was put on a UN blacklist of forces who use child soldiers, when the then guerrilla army was battling the Khartoum government in Sudan's bloody 1983-2005 civil war.

"It is very important that we delist them as soon as possible, and now they are a national army, it becomes extremely important," UN Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict Radhika Coomaraswamy told reporters.

"If you're a violator that's been persistent, there's the possibility of sanctions," she added, noting those could include asset freezes, arms or travel embargoes.

However, she also said the fledgling nation had been

making progress, including demobilising some 3,000 children since the civil war ended seven years ago, and supporting SPLA promises to release the rest.

Although there have been no exact figures on South Sudan's army since independence, it is thought that it numbers somewhere between 100-150,000.

The United Nations classifies a child soldier as anyone under the age of 18.

South Sudan, oil-rich but grossly underdeveloped, is riven by brutal ethnic violence, while the government has sought to quell multiple rebellions by offering to integrate fighters into the army's ranks.

However, Coomaraswamy said the reintegration of former child soldiers was a huge challenge in a nation where over 80 percent are illiterate, and where the bloated army is the only source of paid employment for many.

Following South Sudan's slashing of budgets following a drastic shut down of oil production in January -- providing 98 percent of revenues -- Coomaraswamy said education must be supported to keep children out of armed groups. "Even if there is an austerity budget, education should be a priority," she said.



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## Pope sets up inquiry into leaks at Vatican

VATICAN (AFP) - Pope Benedict XVI has ordered an investigation into the leaks of a string of confidential Vatican documents to the Italian media, the Holy See's official daily newspaper reported Friday.

The investigation would cover every branch of the Vatican administration, wrote Giovanni Maria Vian, the director of the l'Osservatore Romano.

The newspaper interviewed Archbishop Angelo Becciu who will take charge of the investigation. Becciu, who as deputy secretary of state is the third most powerful figure in

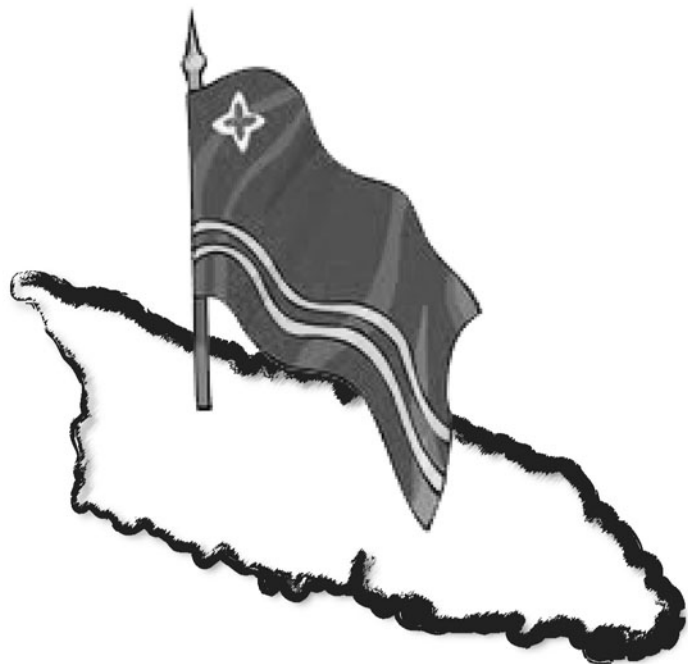
the Church hierarchy, denounced what he called the "lack of loyalty" and "cowardice" of those behind the leaks.

Among the confidential Vatican documents leaked to Italy's press are some that have dealt with allegations of corruption within the Vatican.

Another document, dated December 30, warns the Vatican of an unspecified plot to assassinate Pope Benedict XVI.

Vatican officials have also denounced Italy's press, which has been happy to run stories based on the leaked documents.





**Happy Flag and Anthem Day**

## At least 15 killed when bus in Peru falls into a ravine

LIMA (AFP) - At least 15 people were killed and six injured Friday in northern Peru when a bus left a road and fell 200 meters (660 feet) into a ravine, police said.

The cause of the accident has not yet been announced. The bus driver was killed in the morning crash, which occurred in Peru's Morropon Province about 652 miles (1,050 km) north of the capital Lima.

"We have so far identified 15 killed," police officer Luis Barreto told AFP.

The injured were transported to the nearest hospital in Morropon.

Peru's roads are among the most treacherous in Latin America, accounting for an average of 3,300 deaths per year over the past decade among its nearly 30 million residents.

Despite safety improvements in recent years, 2,900 people were killed in Peruvian traffic accidents in 2010 and 2,830 last year, according to government figures



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**"Patriotism is your conviction that this country is superior to all other countries because you were born in it."**  
**George Bernard Shaw**



**Bula bandera  
Bandera di mi tera  
Bo blauw di shelo cla  
Dorna cu un strea cora  
Dos strepi geel di oro  
Bandera, ay bo ta un tesoro  
E strea rand blanco  
Ta briya contento  
Ta yena mi cu legria  
Mi kier ta Rubiano cu honor  
y canta mi himno cu ardor  
Bandera, bula bandera  
Bandera di mi tera.**

**Poesia di Digna Laclé-Herrera**

***Pabien Aruba cu celebracion di Nos Dia Nacional***





## Finance

### Tap oil reserve to pop speculative bubble

WASHINGTON - A group of Democratic lawmakers in the House of Representatives is again urging President Barack Obama to aggressively use the threat of releasing oil from emergency reserves to rain on speculators driving up oil prices.

The three lawmakers are gathering signatures from others in Congress for a letter to Obama to press him to wield the 696 million barrels of oil that the government stores in salt caverns as a weapon against "rapid price escalations resulting from speculation in the oil markets."

According to British sources released yesterday, Britain is poised to cooperate with the United States on a release of strategic oil stocks that is expected within months.

The White House said no deal had been reached on a release of reserves.

### US lawmakers back Sachs to lead World Bank

WASHINGTON (AFP) - A group of Democratic lawmakers in the US Congress yesterday pushed President Barack Obama to name renowned American economist Jeffrey Sachs as the next World Bank president.

Sachs, whose self-declared candidacy has drawn a number of endorsements from around the world, has the leadership skills for the job, 27 members of the House of Representatives said in a letter to Obama.

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## EU hails 'political agreement' on Colombia, Peru trade deals

BRUSSELS (AFP) - European Union governments hailed today a "political agreement" that leaves only "technical obstacles" to the final signing of Free Trade Agreements (FTA) with Colombia and Peru.

European Union Trade Commissioner Karel De Gucht said the two deals would scrap around 500 million euros in duties every year between the 27-nation bloc and the two South American nations.

Trade ministers from the 27

EU states "reached a political agreement on a draft decision approving the signing and provisional application of a multi-partite free trade agreement with Colombia and Peru," a statement said after day-long talks in Brussels.

"This decision will be adopted at a forthcoming meeting, once the text of the agreement has been finalised, and the consent of the European Parliament will be requested for conclusion of the

agreement."

De Gucht said there remained now only "technical obstacles, no more than that."

Initiated in March 2011, the agreement "includes commitments on the enforcement of labour and environmental standards" and is also open for take-up by Ecuador and Bolivia, the other two members of the Andean Community.

In a separate joint EU-Mercosur statement, referring to a wider South American trade

bloc, it was decided that a next round of negotiations will be held in Brazil in July 2012.

Trade ministers urged Japan to come forward with proposed changes to enable negotiations to begin on an FTA there over coming months.

They said they would meet with another FTA target, Singapore, in two weeks' time hoping to resolve problems over banking market access in those negotiations.



## Our National Anthem

Aruba's National Anthem, "Aruba Dushi Tera" is a waltz composed by Juan Chabaya 'Padu' Lampe (lyrics) and Rufo Wever (music).

**Song: Aruba Dushi Tera**  
*Aruba Dushi Tera*  
*Aruba patria aprecia*  
*nos cuna venera*  
*chikito y simpel bo por*  
*ta pero si respeta.*

Aruba Precious Country  
 Aruba beloved home  
 our venerated cradle  
 though small and simple  
 you may be  
 you are indeed  
 esteemed.

**Refrain:**  
*O, Aruba, dushi tera*  
*nos baranca tan stima*  
*nos amor p'abo t'asina*  
*grandi*  
*cu n'tin nada pa kibre*  
*(bis)*

Refrain:  
 Aruba our dear country  
 our rock so well beloved  
 our love for you is so  
 strong  
 that nothing can destroy  
 it. (repeat)

*Bo playanan tan*  
*admira*  
*cu palma tur dorna*  
*bo escudo y bandera ta*  
*orgullo di nos tur!*



Your beaches so much  
 admired  
 with palm trees all  
 adorned  
 your coat of arms and  
 flag  
 the symbols of our pride.

**Refrain**

*Grandeza di bo pueblo*  
*ta su gran cordialidad*  
*cu Dios por guia y*  
*conserva*  
*su amor pa libertad!*

Refrain  
 The greatness of our  
 people  
 is their great cordiality  
 and may God guide and  
 preserve  
 its love for freedom.  
 Refrain

**Refrain**

**THE RESIDENCES**  
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*We Salute this glorious day and  
 the Arubans who brought it about*

## OUR FLAG

Our national flag was officially adopted on March 18, 1976, along with the official anthem "Aruba Dushi Tera." The four colors each have significance. The blue represents the sea that surrounds Aruba; yellow is the color of abundance, representing the island's past and its industries of gold, aloe and oil; red is for the love each Aruban has for the country and the ancient industry of Brazilwood; and white symbolizes the snow-white beaches as well as the purity of the hearts of Aruba's people who strive for justice, order and liberty.

The symbols on the flag consist of a red star and two yellow stripes. The red star represents the four points of the compass, with the island having drawn people from around the world. The star also represents the island itself, surrounded by the beautiful blue sea. The horizontal yellow stripes denote the free and separate position Aruba



enjoys in the Kingdom of the Netherlands.

We celebrate all that the flag and anthem have come to signify with the national holiday of Flag and Anthem

Day each March 18, the same day that in 1948, Holland accepted Aruba's right to autonomous status in the Kingdom of the Netherlands.

### Language

*Dutch and the local language of Papiamentu are the official languages of Aruba, but most Arubans speak a minimum of four languages including English and Spanish.*





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**As citizens, we all have an obligation to intervene and become involved - it's the citizen who changes things.**

**- Jose Saramago**

## Clooney arrested in Sudan protest



Journalist Nick Clooney (2nd R), his son actor George Clooney (3rd R) and U.S. Rep. Jim Moran (D-VA) (4th R) are arrested by members of the U.S. Secret Service Uniform Division during a protest outside the Sudanese Embassy.

WASHINGTON (AFP) - Actor George Clooney and several members of the US Congress were handcuffed and arrested Friday outside Sudan's embassy as they demanded an end to an offensive they fear will cause a humanitarian crisis.

Swarmed by flashing cameras and TV crews, Clooney led more than one dozen prominent campaigners to the steps of Sudan's mission in Washington's Embassy Row, ignoring several warnings by police to leave the premises.

Officers escorted the "Descendants" star and the other campaigners in plastic handcuffs to police vans. Hundreds of supporters chanted slogans nearby against Sudan's President Omar al-Bashir and waved banners reading, "Sudan: Stop Using Food as a Weapon."

Clooney, a longtime activist for human rights in Sudan, met Thursday with US President Barack Obama after paying a clandestine visit to South Kordofan, where aid groups say 250,000 people are at risk of imminent food shortages.

"We need humanitarian aid to be allowed into the Sudan before it becomes the worst humanitarian crisis in the world -- immediately,"

Clooney said to cheering supporters shortly before his arrest.

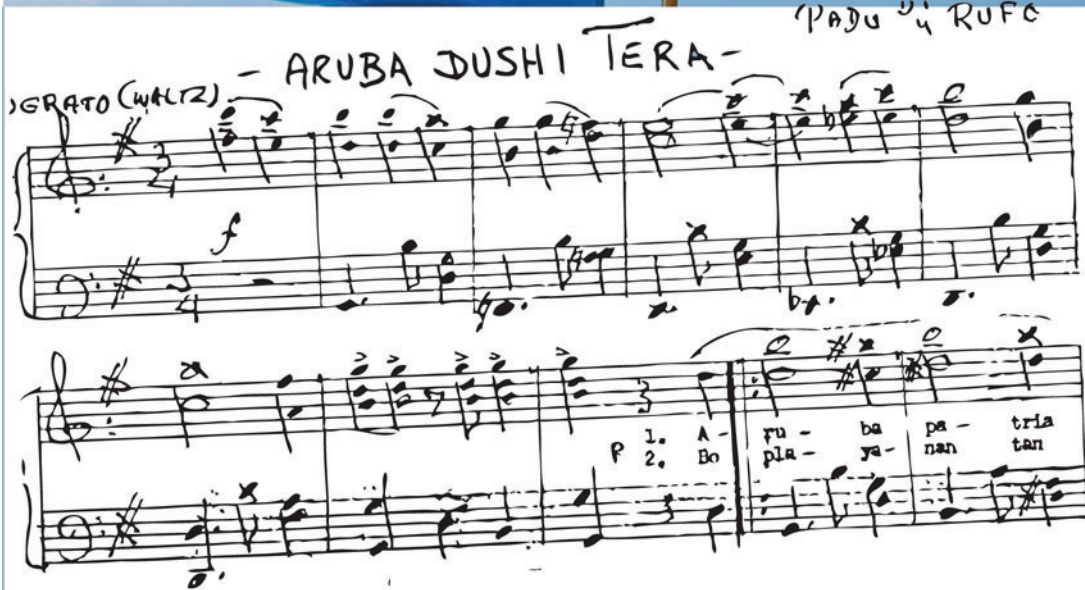
Speaking earlier before the US Congress, Clooney said he saw hundreds of people fleeing in terror to the hills and into caves in South Kordofan due to the constant buzzing of planes dropping bombs meant for insurgents but which frequently kill and maim civilians.

The conflict has severely impeded agriculture in the mountainous region, leading to fears of hunger. The United States has demanded that Sudan let in outside food shipments, but Khartoum is deeply suspicious of US intentions.

The protest was orderly, with some campaigners waiting patiently for police to bring another van. Inside Sudan's embassy, one woman could be seen snapping a photo from the window before the Hollywood heartthrob was taken away.

Four members of the House of Representatives -- Al Green, Jim McGovern, Jim Moran and John Olver -- were also arrested at the protest, along with human rights activists and religious leaders.

They were released later in the day.



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**TUESDAY AND FRIDAY: LIVE MUSIC**

## To no longer grow is a 'blessing' for world's tallest man



file photo of Sultan Kosen

WASHINGTON (AFP) - Turkey's Sultan Kosen, at eight foot three (2.51 meters) the world's tallest living man, says it's "a blessing" he is no longer growing thanks to radiosurgery in the United States.

"I am honored and grateful for this life-saving surgery," said Kosen, 29, via an email to AFP on Thursday from Guinness World Records in London, whose offices he visited the day before.

"Without my record-breaking status, I would never have had the opportunity to tell people about my condition," he added. "It is a blessing."

Nearly two years after gamma ray radiosurgery in the eastern state of Virginia, doctors confirmed this week that Kosen has overcome acromegaly, a rare hormonal disorder that caused him to keep growing well into adulthood.

"He's stopped growing,

which is good," neurosurgeon Jason Sheehan, who performed the non-invasive procedure that zapped the troublesome pituitary tumor within Kosen's brain with extreme precision, told AFP.

"He will still have some medical therapy to deal with the excessive height he has achieved," added Sheehan by telephone from the University of Virginia Medical Center in Charlottesville.

"However, it is hopeful that he will not have any additional challenges because of continued growth."

Born into a farming family in southeastern Turkey, Kosen gained global renown in September 2009 when Guinness World Records declared him the tallest man in the world. He was then eight feet one inch (2.47 meters) tall.

Acromegaly typically results from a benign tumor in the pea-sized pituitary gland at the base of the brain. Such

a tumor can result in the production of too much growth hormone, leading in turn to gigantism, or excessive growth.

Sheehan and his team treated Kosen's tumor in August 2010 with a precisely targeted shot of extremely high frequency gamma rays, using

a non-invasive radiosurgical device known as a Gamma Knife.

"While Mr Kosen is the tallest person, he is not unique," Sheehan said. "In terms of pituitary disorders, acromegaly is one of the more common disorders you can have. Obviously, Sultan had

an extreme case of it."

Craig Glenday, editor in chief of Guinness World Records, said being a record holder had its benefits, "but none so important than the gift of essential medical treatment that would otherwise be beyond one's means."

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## Syria protesters urge military intervention



DAMASCUS (AFP) - Thousands of anti-regime protesters called on Friday for foreign military intervention to bring down a Syrian government whose brutal crackdown on dissent monitors say has cost more than 9,100 lives.

The protests after weekly Muslim prayers were called by activists on their Facebook page, Syrian Revolution 2011, to demand "immediate military intervention by the Arabs and Muslims, followed by the rest of the world."

"The people want military intervention, the Free Syrian

Army to be armed, and the fall of the regime," several thousand demonstrators chanted in Aleppo in northern Syria, an activist at the scene told AFP in Beirut by telephone.

Thousands of others took part in protests in the flash-point provinces of Homs and across Daraa in the south as well as several districts of Damascus and the region, said Rami Abdel Rahman of the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights.

On the day after the first anniversary of the outbreak of the revolt against President Bashar al-Assad, the Britain-based monitoring group said at least 15 people were killed in violence across Syria on Friday.

Huge rallies in support of Assad were held in Damascus and other major cities on Thursday to mark the anniversary. But numbers have fallen at anti-regime demonstrations as security forces seize protest centres.

With the opposition divided, Western countries have been opposed to military intervention although Qatar and Saudi Arabia, Assad's fiercest critics in the Arab world, have come out in favour of arming the rebels.

In a breakdown of 9,113 deaths in the past 12 months, not including the latest fatalities, the Syrian Observatory said the toll comprised 6,645 civilians, 1,997 members of the security forces and 471 rebels.

The United Nations and Organisation of Islamic Cooperation are this weekend to send experts on a Syrian government-led humanitarian mission to the protest cities of Homs, Daraa and Hama where thousands have reportedly been killed.

## Congratulations Aruba on your Flag and Anthem Day



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**"It's especially troublesome when the very people who are supposed to protect children put them in harm." - Jennifer Andary**



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*Stima semper loke ta di nos!*

